

**2010 CENSUS BUREAU PRESS BRIEFING**  
**June 2, 2010**

**STEPHEN BUCKNER:** Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to the Press Club. My name is Stephen Buckner. I'm in the Public Information Office at the U.S. Census Bureau and will be moderating today's news briefing. Today, Dr. Groves will be providing an operational status update on the 2010 census. We've been in the field for over a month now conducting follow-up interviews, going door to door for those households who did not mail back a questionnaire for the 2010 census.

Dr. Groves will speak for about 15 minutes or so, providing an update on those operations, and also future operations. Followed by that, we will have our regional director, Fernando Armstrong, who is now in this fourth census, to also provide some local updates here in the D.C. area, and Maryland, and the other states that he covers out of the Philadelphia regional office. For those of you joining us on the web, there should be some materials on our home page of which you can view. If there's any additional handouts, we will make sure we get those to you as well. And as always, for those on the phone as well, you can submit questions at any time during the operational press briefing, and those will be queued up for the end of the session when we begin our question and answer period.

So following the remarks of Fernando Armstrong, we will then begin about a 15 minute Q&A period. We will try to alternate between those individuals here in the room and those viewing on the web or joining us by telephone. With that, I give you Dr. Groves. Thank you very much.

**DR. ROBERT GROVES:** Thank you, Stephen. Great to be here with you. And great to have people on the phone and on the web. Perhaps the single most important message I have to deliver today is that the 2010 census is on schedule and under budget. I can give you a few figures that elaborate on that conclusion. We have as of last night, we have completed roughly about 77 percent of the entire workload of this non-response follow-up phase, which is visiting 47 million households using about 600,000 employees. We

have checked in about 66 percent of that entire workload in our local census offices, 500 offices spread throughout the country. We have scanned over 18 million forms of the non-response follow-up phase, which means that over 100 million census questionnaires nationally have been scanned in or are now sitting in data records from the mail back phase, as well as the non-response follow-up phase.

And on the budget side, where as we expected at this point in the operations to have spent about 61 percent of the non-response follow-up budget, we've spent about 53 percent. So I have good news for all of those reasons, that we are on schedule and under budget. This phase of the census lasts until about July 10<sup>th</sup>. Even though we've finished a large bulk of the activity already, there's a long tail of finishing up in areas, offices that have big workloads throughout the country. Those will take a little longer to finish up.

You have probably seen our census takers in your community. The message that we are trying to get out there through our partners and through our own behalf is that now is the time to cooperate with those people, your neighbors, really, who are working with us to complete the census. Open your door when they call on you and answer those 10 simple questions that are part of the 2010 census.

We have posted on our website the weekly totals of the numbers of workers who are working on the census, and those are broken down by each of our 12 regions. For those of you who want to follow our spending of the taxpayer money, we want to be as transparent as we can.

You might want to see what our census enumerators look like. We have videos on our website of real enumerators talking about themselves, why they made this decision to offer themselves as public servants for this important event that the nation goes through every ten years.

I think it also important to remind people of why we're calling on houses. I've gotten emails and queries from folks who say, "I sent in my census form, but still someone came

to my door.” So let me just go through a few of the reasons why someone might visit you. We are both visiting and face to face visits American households, and we're also telephoning some of them. So first, why would we visit your home if you did indeed return your form? You may have submitted an incomplete form. We find people sometimes answering questions incompletely and we may call you at your home for that. You may have submitted your form too late to be pulled from the stack of addresses that we wanted to follow up. That is, we thought you were a non-responding household at the moment we started the non-response follow-up phase.

We may have trouble matching the address that you wrote on a Be Counted form if that's the way you enumerated yourself, and we'll call back just to verify that we've counted you once, and only once, and in the right place. And then we may call on you because we're checking up in the field on cases. We want to double check that we've counted everyone once, and only once.

You may be receiving phone calls as well, or may receive a phone call. For that, we are calling back numbers where people may have reported a number of people on the form that is discrepant within the form. That is, on question one you might have said there are three people in the house. But then when we look at your completed form, you have reported the attributes of only two of them. We'll telephone you back just to make sure we understand what the right answers are.

We'll also telephone you if you noted that there are some people that were staying at the address on April 1 but were not included in the count. Same purpose there. We want to make sure we count everyone once and only once. And then if we suspect there may be duplicate information for one individual in the household, we may telephone you just to make sure, once again, that we've done the appropriate counting.

I think there are four things that you should know about our enumerators who are now walking the streets and knocking on doors. Number one, they are a determined crew. We train them to get complete counts. They will repeatedly visit a household that they've

been assigned; three personal visits, three telephone calls, in many cases. We call this a persistent action on their part. We understand that some people feel that we're harassing them. We hope you don't feel that way, and we beg for your patience, and we beg for your cooperation when they do indeed knock on your door maybe for a second or third time, that you take the time to answer the questions.

Second point to know is that occasionally our enumerators have to bypass a no trespassing sign to visit the home. The federal law recognizes their right as a federal agent to execute their duties as a census enumerator. And some people misunderstand that, some indeed call the local police. But in these cases, we want everyone to know that they are fulfilling their duty as a public servant, as a census taker, and that that no trespassing sign, under federal law, does not restrict their access to knocking on your door.

The third thing to note is that our enumerators will not ask to enter the household. They're trained not to do that. They are trained, if you ask them to enter, to do so if they feel safe doing that. But one way to recognize a scam if you're worried about scams, is someone at your door who indeed wants to enter and claiming that they're a Census Bureau employee. This won't happen on the 2010 census.

The fourth thing to note, I believe I've noted this in prior press conferences, our employees go through an FBI background check and fingerprint check. I want to remind everyone that they take an oath that requires them to keep the answers they obtain from households confidential, kept only by the Census Bureau. This means they can't be shared with any federal, local or state agency of enforcement or with any owners, landlords of the property. It is a safe thing to do to participate in the census for that reason.

The fifth thing to note, I think we've noted this before, the way to recognize a census taker at your doorstep is they'll have a badge around their neck, a white badge, and they'll be carrying a black briefcase with a very large white Census logo on it. Again, they won't

ask to come into your house, and they won't ask a lot of intrusive questions like social security numbers and bank accounts, and so on. They'll only ask these simple, non-intrusive questions on the 2010 census.

I want to go through a series of events and news and questions that we're receiving just to make sure that you understand our procedures. You may know that there was a serious incident in Indiana where a census taker was allegedly involved in a burglary and rape. This person had indeed passed our background check, had no criminal history. We've triple checked this now. This is a horrible incident, it's one that's deplorable and it disturbed us greatly. Later, there was an unfortunate incident in New Jersey where a sex offender was hired and was working as an enumerator for a short period of time before his fingerprint check was complete. And the fingerprint check indeed recognized him as having been convicted for those sex offenses.

As a result of this last incident, I called for a review of our hiring and security procedures. We did a deep dive into what went wrong on these cases, whether we could tighten our procedures, and we've made three changes in how we are processing new hires. Starting immediately, no hire will be allowed into the field without passing the fingerprint screening process. We will wait for the resolution of that step before they are allowed to begin their work. Starting immediately, any name check done in the FBI database that discovers a mismatch between name, age, social security number and gender, will indeed stop the processing of an applicant and that case will be set aside until we resolve those discrepancies.

And then also starting immediately, whenever new information is obtained about criminal activity of our staff, we will proactively from headquarters and regional offices call directly into the local offices so that immediate action can be taken. These enhancements in their totality would have prevented this event in New Jersey from happening. If we find other weaknesses, we will tighten our procedures based on review of those. But we're happy that we can announce these new tightening things.

Let me comment on other events that have occurred since the last briefing I've had. In an operation of this size of non-response follow-up, there will be incidents that occur on the streets and byways of America. I'm sad to say more often than not, this is the census worker who is the victim of these events. We have had more than a hundred incidents of assaults or attacks on our personnel. There have been a number of shootings and threats involving guns. There have been robberies. There have been some carjackings and people held against their will. Seven employees now have been killed in auto accidents, and one employee was murdered while off duty in an event that appears to be completely unconnected with her employment as an enumerator.

Given that we're deploying over half a million workers throughout the country, this number of incidents may appear to be small, but every one of them is a personal tragedy and a loss to the census family and we grieve those events.

Let me comment in that context on three things that we do to try to protect our staff. The training itself attempts to convey techniques to detect whether the interviewers are in an unsafe situation. We ask them to retreat immediately if they feel uncomfortable in any situations. When they confront an angry respondent, we ask them to politely disengage and return to the local office and seek guidance from their crew leader on how to handle the case.

Managers are allowed to use teams of enumerators in situations that appear to be unsafe in order that the work get done on schedule. By the way, a comment on this hiring locally, hiring people that know the neighborhoods they work in is a great idea on this score. And we benefit from people who know the comings and goings of the neighborhoods they're working in.

Third point to note is that we do not allow law enforcement officers to accompany our staff in any situation. We don't share respondent data with law enforcement agents, although we do alert, and have alerted, over 30,000 law enforcement agencies around the

country that we are working in the area, to make sure they are aware that our employees are out and about and that they are doing legitimate work of the Census Bureau.

There have been questions recently about how our enumerators are paid. The way to think about these procedures is to divide them into two different kinds of situations. At the time of training of our enumerators, we expect each day to be an eight hour day. They are paid for travel to the site, the time involved in travel to the site. They're paid for class time, and they're paid for reviewing materials that they're given, training manuals. We expect this to be taking about eight hours, and over the 35,000 locations that we use for training, there's some variation in that time. That's kind of the first way that the hours are recorded.

Once they begin work in the field, each day they record the number of hours they worked and the number of miles that they drove. They report to their crew leader those miles and those hours. The crew leader inspects the amount of time charge relative to the production, how many interviews have been completed and turned in that day. Have discussions with the employee about whether there are unusual problems that produce larger charging than was commensurate with the production.

And then there's another review within the local census office. Then there are reports that are produced that allow us to check on the relative amount of charging versus the production. That kind of three levels of auditing and monitoring that goes on is something that we're very serious about. If we find that enumerators have unusually large chargers relative to production, they are dismissed rather quickly, I might add.

Let me comment personally on this. Ever since I was appointed, I was appointed to this position, I've focused on the cost of the census. This is something I care deeply about. We are stewards of the taxpayers' money. I am proud to say my colleagues, since my arrival, have produced operations that are under budget and on schedule, and we continue to do that in this phase of the census. There is nothing I feel more deeply than our challenge and our obligation to use these monies wisely. And I call on anyone who finds any

systemic pattern of overcharging to report that to us. We want to root it out quickly and change our processes if we-- and change our personnel if we find problems in that regard.

Let me turn to another issue that has been prominent in the census of 2010, and that is the paper based operation control system, a complicated piece of software that was developed in the last two years. This has been a high risk software development from its beginning. In the early days of non-response follow-up, this system was not performing at the level we needed to finish this operation. We called in consultants from the outside in the operating system of this and in the database design of this system, and we have made improvements, I'm happy to say, in this system that allows me to report that that now, that check-in process that is so crucial to the completion of non-response follow-up is going much better. We are now checking in forms at the 500 local census offices at a rate that has never been performed in prior censuses before.

So that's kind of a comment on events since the last briefing. Let me look ahead a bit and describe operations that we do that are totally focused on quality assurance, quality control in this census. But it requires visiting houses repeatedly. And in a way, this is a notice to the American public that even though you may have received a visit and non-response follow-up, there may still be another visit coming. I will go through about four operations that we are either engaged in right now, or will launch soon. One that we're engaged in right now is a re-interview operation. We take a sample of every enumerator's work, and a different enumerator goes back to that household to make sure that the job was done correctly. This work will go on through July 17<sup>th</sup>. This obviously may entail another visit for some people who we've already visited. We ask that you cooperate with those. This is the way we keep the quality in the 2010 census high.

The second operation is called the coverage follow-up operation. We call on households if in reviewing their questionnaires we need to clarify some of the answers, we don't understand the pattern of answers. For those who provided telephone numbers on mail back questionnaires, we will telephone you. For others, we may make a personal visit.



The third operation will begin at the end of July. It is called a vacant delete check. And even though our interviewers right now are knocking on doors and judging some units to be vacant, we're going to double check that in a few weeks to make sure we haven't missed anyone in those vacant houses, to make sure we understand the April 1 residency status of a particular house.

And then the fourth operation that we will launch in August can be thought of as the final status check on addresses. We've receive some new addresses through local officials and Be Counted forms. We will call back on those units to make sure we got the address right. We don't want to count people twice, we don't want to misplace people geographically because the census requires us to count people once and only once and in the right place.

So let me sum up. We are in the middle of an important phase of the census called non-response follow-up. It is a critical phase where we attempt and we will complete an enumeration of 100 percent of the population by the time this is over. Our watch words are the same. We ask for your cooperation, we ask for the patience of those who filled out a form and are still getting visited. We're doing this because the American public demands that the census be a high quality event and we go to extra lengths to make sure that we're counting 100 percent of the population, and only 100 percent, once and only once. So I thank you for being here and look forward to your questions. And I want to introduce Fernando Armstrong, who's one of our wonderful regional directors. He of the Philadelphia region, and he can give you insight into what's happening here. The Philadelphia region covers the Washington area. Fernando?

**FERNANDO ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Bob. Good afternoon. I'm Fernando Armstrong, the regional director for the Philadelphia region and we cover five states: Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, the District of Columbia, and the southern part of New Jersey and that's why I'm here. I believe you already heard, we are on the fifth week of non-response follow-up. We have a few more weeks, it ends July 10<sup>th</sup>. We are doing

well in the field. The enumeration is progressing well. We have the adequate amount of staff to do the work. I'll talk about that in a moment.

In my region, in my five states, we have completed approximately 75 percent of the visits to the homes that did not return the census forms. We're happy about that. Sixty percent of the work has been checked in to the system that the director described that we want to account for every one of those questionnaires. So, that system is working. Every one of our 36 local offices in the five states we cover are working around the clock, three shifts, 24 hours a day, just to make sure that all the operations are on schedule and they are indeed on schedule.

In terms of the staff in the field, we still have approximately 74 percent of the staff that we initially hired to do the non-response follow-up. That in itself is a success story. In the past, it has been very difficult to staff the operations and to maintain a full staff to carry them through the end. We used to have a high turnover rate. This time around, we are very pleased with the amount of people that applied, with the caliber of the people that we have been able to hire, and the fact that they have worked longer hours and stayed with the job through the end. That's a very good thing for us.

The director mentioned the meetings, and I want to, from a field perspective, I want to talk about that because that's important. Every day in every part of the country, for every one of these thousands of people that we have in the field, they come together and they review their work with their crew leader. That hasn't changed. That has never changed, and that has been an integral part of our success in the field. We collect, we review the payrolls, we collect completed work, we provide guidance and support to the enumerators on how they need to complete their work. That's still happening and it's very, very successful.

One of the things that in the field has been extremely helpful and indicative of where we are now is the relationships that we established with thousands and thousands of partner organizations. The awareness they helped us create in the public, the willingness to open

the door, to be part of the census, that is very, very important for us in the field. And we are still working with our partner chief of staff, we are still working with our partners and that message is getting out, which is one of the reasons why we feel that the progress is so positive, so different from past censuses.

Soon, we will start the quality review operations that the director mentioned. We feel that we will have the staff that we need for that. We feel that we will have the time to complete those operations. We are not rushing through any of the operations. Everything is going to be right on schedule and we feel that by having the staff and having the right materials and all the things we need, that will be happening on time.

Lastly, I want to mention that we feel that in many ways, the story of the census in 2010 goes back to beginning with the American community survey. I think the fact that we have only a short form in the census in 2010, that has been a major contributor to us being able to be where we are, and I think that is a success story in itself.

The second thing I want to mention is the partnership program and the communications campaign. I think that it would have been very difficult for us in the field if we had been working without that umbrella that has opened doors for us and has been so helpful in what we are doing.

And then lastly, I know the director mentioned about attacks or threats. We've had those, yes. We've had those. But in general terms, aside from those incidents, the public has been very receptive and we are very pleased with that. I think that is something that we had not experienced in the past. And I feel that hopefully we will continue to enjoy that support from the public. Thank you.

**STEPHEN BUCKNER:** Okay, that concludes our remarks for the operation press briefing. What we'll do is begin a question and answer period. What we will try to do is alternate between people attending here in the room and those viewing on the web or participating by phone. So once you're recognized here in the room, please state your

name and organization with your question, and then we'll float back to the telephone and I ask that you do the same thing. So with that, Dr. Groves, Fernando, you may have some questions as well. You're welcome to join us. So we'll start here in the room with Q&As. Carol, and then we'll come down here?

**CAROL MORELLO:** Carol Morello with the *Washington Post*. Dr. Groves, have there been any allegations of improprieties of any nature in the Detroit office?

**DR. ROBERT GROVES:** As you may have read, the regional director of the Detroit office has been replaced by an acting director, Wayne Hatcher, who is also the director of our Charlotte office. This is a personnel matter that I can't actually elaborate on. But I can report that. I can also report that the Detroit region in the 2010 decennial census, is performing quite well. All the statistics suggest that the census, as a whole, is on target within the region.

**STEPHEN BUCKNER:** Okay, we'll go to the telephone to see if there are any questions, and we'll come back here into the room.

**OPERATOR:** Our first question comes from Tom Banse, KUOW Radio.

**TOM BANSE:** I have a question for Dr. Groves. We have a number of rural listeners in northwest Idaho, and some of them have written us saying they have not been contacted by either a census taker or received a form in the mail. And at this point are concerned they might not be counted. Can you comment on getting out into the far rural reaches of western America?

**DR. ROBERT GROVES:** Right. I don't know the specifics of the case you mention. It is important to note that in different areas of the country, the local census offices are moving at different rates. There are variations in the amount of the workload for an office, and how the work is scheduled. It's important, I think, for your listeners to know

that this operation goes through July 10<sup>th</sup>. I think it's also relevant to note that if there are great concerns, and as the days go by, calling the telephone questionnaire assistance line is an appropriate act on the part of a citizen, or part of a resident who's concerned about being counted. And that number is an 800 number on the website of the Census Bureau.

**STEPHEN BUCKNER:** Great. We'll go back into the room here. I think down here in front, Andrea?

**ANDREA STONE:** Hi, Andrea Stone with AOL News. You did touch on this before about how you pay the workers. But I'd like if you could talk a little bit about James O'Keefe and his videos about that very subject, and also apparently he's got a new one coming out about the hiring of census workers. And can you just tell me whether you think these are legitimate complaints he has? And if not, why?

**DR. ROBERT GROVES:** I don't know the recent video, but let me talk about what we do and why we do things. As I mentioned, the training procedures that we set up are ones that have to be applicable to training in 35,000 locations by 35,000 trainers training 600,000 people on the same day, on the same days. This is a massive enterprise. The guidelines that we give people is that this training should require about eight hours a day, and as I said, the payment for work, the agreement with the enumerators, trainees, is that they would be paid for travel time to the location, for classroom time and for self study.

There is variation across those 35,000 sites in how long it takes to communicate the training guidelines. This variation is a function of the instructor, how effective they are communicating. It's a function of the class, who's in the class. Do they understand the training guidelines at the same rate? Are there some in the class that have an unusual amount of questions that slow down the training? And as with many training experiences for other jobs, this expected value is the payment agreement that we have with enumerators. Once they leave training, there's a completely different process that goes on, a process that Fernando described, that involves multiple levels of review, of payroll reports, daily payroll reports that are compared to production.

And it is through that procedure that we try to make sure that every hour worked, every hour charged by people, is hours worked towards the activities that they're employed to do. And then the final thing to note is we care about this. We know that we are spending large amounts of the taxpayer money, and when we find procedures or personnel that are not following those guidelines, they are dismissed. If there is information that people have about systemic problems, departures from those guidelines, I'd like to know about it.

**STEPHEN BUCKNER:** I believe we have another question on the phone?

**OPERATOR:** The next question comes from Melissa Raines, *Mount Vernon News*.

**MELISSA RAINES:** Hello Dr. Groves. My question is we've heard from a number of our readers in rural areas where they have in past census received their forms in the mail. But this census, they're receiving door to door visits from enumerators because they have post office boxes and there's no mail carriers within many of the villages here. And they've been very confused by that. So my question is what efforts were made to inform those millions of people in rural areas that they would not be receiving something in the mail the way they had in the past, but that they would receive a mandatory visit from an enumerator at the census?

**DR. ROBERT GROVES:** First of all, although I don't know this precise example, this is true in many areas of the country. And I think thank you of getting this word out, hopefully to your readers, about this. It's important, I think, for people to understand why we do this. In addition to counting everyone in the country, we have to place them in a physical location. The way we've done this since 1790 is to choose their residence as that physical location. Postal boxes can be purchased by anyone anywhere. And so mailing to a postal box doesn't fulfill that duty for us to know where the person is residing when we mail it to a postal box.

So for those with post office boxes, and by the way we learned this through a wonderful collaboration with the U.S. Postal Service, for those houses we do face to face enumeration, and many of those are getting visits right now.

Looking back on the 2010 census, I think many of my colleagues and I agree that we could have done better at getting the word out to that population. It's a tough message to get out because it's scattered throughout the entire country, and there are people with postal boxes who are living next door to people who get their mail delivered there. So how to get the message out in a non-confusing way is a challenge. That we could have done better in 2010, I admit. And I hope you in your own journalistic efforts help us get that word out now.

**STEPHEN BUCKNER:** Okay, we'll come back here into the room. Right here in the third row. If you could wait for the microphone please? Thank you.

**LORI MONTENEGRO:** Lori Montenegro, Telemundo Network. I wanted to ask what has been the response so far of the Hispanic community where you've done so much outreach? And also, how well have you done with reaching those workers who are basically migrant workers? They move around the country sometimes every three months?

**DR. ROBERT GROVES:** Those are two important questions that we care deeply about. First of all, I'm really, really happy to report in the mail back phase, we were watching this daily, by the way. We were looking at the census tracks, these small geographical units by their prevalence of both non-English speakers and Hispanic population. And there was one feature of this census that really helped the Hispanic returns, and that was the mailing of a replacement form disproportionately into hard to enumerate tracks that are disproportionately occupied by Hispanic folks. That increased their return rate. It really worked. So this is a good news thing for the Hispanic population.

We also saw, as you reflected in your question, the effects in local areas of enormous organization on the part of the Hispanic community throughout the country. Our partners, as Fernando has mentioned, there are just tons of examples of these things, wonderful events that got the word out. We then also targeted advertising, we were watching this day by day. We targeted advertising in areas that weren't performing as well as we wanted that had high Hispanic prevalence rates.

Right now in the non-response follow-up phase, it's hard to comment on your question. We're systematically going around the country and those comparisons are much harder to do right now. We see no evidence of problems, disproportionately in Hispanic areas, for example, with regard to cooperation with our census takers. But I must admit, it's harder to study this in this phase than in the earlier phase.

**FERNANDO ARMSTRONG:** It's difficult for me not to say something about this, so please excuse me. I believe we've had a great support and participation of the Latino community. Being Hispanic myself, we have worked extensively with many, many partner organizations to the extent that they took ownership of the process. And we were being appointed to activities and things we needed to do to make sure that the Latino community was counted. Even in the phase of the door to door visits that we are doing now, when we knock on those doors with people that can speak the language, that understand the culture, that are from those neighborhoods, it makes a big difference. And when we knock on that door, people know why we are there and why it is important for them to participate.

This is something that we had not experienced in the past. And this is not just the Latino community. I mean, we have seen this with many, many immigrant groups that want to be counted and have taken steps beyond what we expected to make sure that they are part of the census in 2010.

**STEPHEN BUCKNER:** Great. Before we go to the next question, I'd also like to mention that on our website, [2010census.gov](http://2010census.gov), we have a lot of information that identifies



how to recognize a census worker when they come to your door, as well as some videos of actual census takers. So you can actually go out and meet them a little bit. So on our site, 2010census.gov, you can see a lot of information so that you can make sure when somebody comes to your door, how to recognize them as a census worker. With that, we'll go to the telephones.

**OPERATOR:** The next question comes from Pardia Javalas (?), Bilingual Radio.

**PARDIA JAVALAS:** Hi, this is a question for Dr. Groves. We've heard from folks in different areas of the country, like New Orleans area, for example, with a large immigrant population, that there are only two bilingual enumerators in the whole area. And I'm just wondering whether the census is planning to hire more bilingual enumerators to count everyone that doesn't speak English and is mostly Spanish speaking?

**DR. ROBERT GROVES:** I don't know, again, the particular case you're talking about. We attempt to hire interviewers with the language skills needed for the neighborhoods they're working. When an enumerator goes to a home where the residents speak languages that the enumerator can't, we have various devices, little cards that help identify the language. And then we attempt to send back an enumerator with the right language skills.

We're serious about linking language abilities. When we have recruiting problems, we may supplement the staff to get those language skills that we need. And the best I can say in response to your question is that we're attempting to staff with the language skills we need for those neighborhoods.

**STEPHEN BUCKNER:** Additionally on that question, if you give us a call at the Public Information Office, we can definitely put you in touch with our Dallas regional director, Gabriel Sanchez, and we can take a look at that a little bit at a more micro level if you need. Go here in the room to Max?

**MAX KAKAS:** Thank you, Stephen. Max Kakas from Federal News Radio and WTOP Radio. Dr. Groves, you spoke during your presentation about the problems with the paper-based software. I wanted to give you an opportunity to maybe expand on that a little bit. Tell us a little bit more about what the problem was, and do you have any metrics you can share with us about the flow problems that you were having, the scanning problems that you were having? Compare that then, when you were having the problems and how successful you are, or what kind of success you're having now? Thank you.

**DR. ROBERT GROVES:** Sure. This software system, called the Paper Base Operation Control System, performs various functions that are really crucial for the non-response follow-up phase. It permits the assignment of cases to interviewers and crew leaders. It permits the check in of completed cases. It had functions in it that permitted the shipping of completed enumerator questionnaires off to our three processing centers. In the early days, it became, of the non-response follow-up phase, it became clear that several of those functions were competing with one another in ways that degraded the performance. We brought in some outside experts and focused the attention and the developmental team on that and most agree that the major cause of this is competition for control of access to individual data records in a pretty complicated database.

So if one function grabbed control of a data record in order to update it, for example, it held control on that data record longer than it should have. So as you ramp up the number of users accessing the same data record, you began to see degraded performance. We've systematically overnight, every night, tried to clean up those database characteristics and have done so to a degree that we can now say that we're processing at rates that we never imagined we could process. We've restricted the number of users on the system, but their productivity is so high, much higher than we ever thought, that we're checking in for the last four or five days. We'd have two million records that had been checked in every day. At that rate, we are just getting rid of this backlog. We're now ahead of schedule.

Now to do that, in addition to fixing those database control features, we also reviewed all of the functions that were performed by the software and we jettisoned some. We had work arounds. For example, the shipping function is now handled not through this software system, but through an auxiliary software system that doesn't depend on that. That was a work around done by staff at the Census Bureau in real time as a contingency. We exercised the contingency and it's really working well.

So the summary of this is we fixed up some of the database properties of the system. We restricted users, and we jettisoned some non-core functions to work arounds that produced the success we're now enjoying.

**STEPHEN BUCKNER:** We'll go back to the telephones if we have any additional questions?

**OPERATOR:** The next question comes from Chris Hubbuch, *La Crosse Tribune*.

**CHRIS HUBBUCH:** Hi, it was good to hear from Mr. Armstrong regarding progress in some of the eastern regions. But for those of us in other parts of the country, I'm curious how we can get more information about the operations and particularly some of the challenges, what you're doing to meet those at sort of other region and state levels?

**DR. ROBERT GROVES:** Yeah, I could comment on some regional variation. This is something we are studying every day. And in the early days, we saw that there were some challenges being faced in the New York region and in the Dallas region. Some of these were workload related issues, some were enumerator production issues, some were management issues. We've actually supplemented the management staff in these areas down at the local census office level over the past three weeks, I guess. And those disparities across the regions have declined because of that. Those two regions have come up in their performance in really dramatic ways.

Regions vary also on other dimensions. Some of the western regions, those especially that are assigned Native American reservations where we do direct enumeration as the tool, have more backlog because those types of enumerator forms had some check in problems. We're finishing this operation, but that about two weeks ago, was a source of some disparity across the regions. So, I think I can say that the typical patterns of enumerator problems in large urban areas are present in this census, Fernando might comment on that. The correlates, the influences on what makes it difficult for an enumerator to finish their job are present this time. High density population, multi-unit structures, restricted access, subdivisions, those kinds of things slow down work wherever they appear. Some of those are related to regional differences. I don't know whether you could elaborate or not?

**FERNANDO ARMSTRONG:** The challenge is that you observe in a region like New York or Dallas, are very, very particular. I've had the opportunity to work twice in the New York region and it's a very challenging area because you have the high rises with restricted access. You have a large, very diverse population with languages and cultures and many different particularities that make it challenging for us.

The good thing, the positive thing, is that we have a process in place to be able to address that. The census in 2010 is no different in that respect than the census in 2000 or in 1990 in terms of the complexity of the areas. But this time around, I think the fact that we are only talking about a short form census, the American Community Survey, has made a major contribution to our ability to do a census in New York. Many of us have been supporting all the regions in terms of shifting staff, shifting access to the check-in system. And we will continue to do that and we anticipate that the completion of those regions will be as successful as the rest of the country. It has always been, and there's no reason why we would expect any different this time.

**STEPHEN BUCKNER:** Okay, we've actually mentioned the American Community Survey a couple of times. So if you have any questions, again, please call our Public Information Office. But very quickly, the American Community Survey is an annual

survey of about three million housing units a year. And it's able to produce timely annual data about the key socioeconomic and housing characteristics of the population. And in fact, later this fall we'll be having our first five years worth of data that can go down to the neighborhood level so it'll be the first update and snapshot for communities about how they've changed from a socioeconomic or housing characteristic level. You'll get additional information as we near that date later this fall.

We have time for two more questions. We'll go here in the room and then I want to free up some time to where the director is able to accommodate some of the television media here before he has to leave. I see two hands here in the room. So you're here, let me hit both of you. You first, and then I'll come back to you.

**IAN MCKENDRY:** Hello, a question for Dr. Groves. Ian Mckendry, *Market News*. The April BLS report show that there were 66,000 new census workers hired, while the Census Bureau reported 156,000. So my question is just why the discrepancy? Or do you expect a similar discrepancy in May?

**DR. ROBERT GROVES:** I'm glad you asked that question because it gives me an opportunity to describe what the BLS numbers do. So, the BLS numbers that we contribute our number to, the statistics they produce and I guess two days from now there'll be a new update of those numbers, measure employment, jobs, held by people on the week of the 12<sup>th</sup> of that month, of the prior month. So this is June, we will get the May numbers. And the number that BLS produces is actually a change estimate. What's the difference between the employment count in May versus April. The 66 figure is really a difference, then. It's the addition for census between, I guess that would have been March and April. Is that right? I'm talking about the right months?

This report will reflect our employment, this report that comes up in a couple of days, will reflect our employment as of the week of May 12<sup>th</sup>, which will be a big rise for us. The numbers we're putting on our website allow you to see our little contribution to this big national number. But so it's important to realize that those are counts of people in

jobs, people holding jobs. And then a difference between months, not the total in the month, but the difference between months.

**STEPHEN BUCKNER:** Great, thank you. And we'll have the question here in the room to close us down.

**MELINA CARUSO:** Thank you. Melina Caruso with the Washington Bureau of ABC with the Om TV stations. And my question, when you're looking at areas that might have had natural disasters, for instance in California or recently in Nashville, or even the people who are still displaced in New Orleans from Katrina, how do you basically go through the challenges of trying to find these people?

**DR. ROBERT GROVES:** This is a great question. And if you look over history, we've done censuses in this country where there have been hurricanes wiping out cities and floods, volcanoes, all sorts of things, earthquakes. Let me take the New Orleans example, since that's one you mentioned. In New Orleans, we changed our procedures in Orleans, Plaquemines, the St. Bernard Parish, to reflect the fact that that was going to be an area around the April one time, undergoing dramatic changes in occupancy of housing units.

So instead of mailing, as we did predominantly in 2000, our censuses workers actually dropped off forms door by door by door in those three parishes. People mailed back those forms who were living in those units. Some of the forms were left on units that appeared to be inhabitable, but were not inhabited at the moment the form was placed on there. And indeed, no one has ever come back. We're now in this phase going to every one of those doors, again, and we're asking first, "Is there someone in the house now?" If there's someone there, we're going to ask them where they were on April 1<sup>st</sup>, because we have to fix the population on April 1<sup>st</sup>. If there's no one there, we're actually going to go next door, or we're going to try to get information about whether that unit was indeed occupied on April 1 and we missed people there.

So we go through a whole lot of effort to make sure we've counted people, as I've said a million times, once and only once, and in the right place. Is this easy to do? Is it error free? It is not easy to do and we know, although we do the best we can, this is a difficult part of the census.

Nashville is a little better because of the timing of the floods in Nashville. By the way, there are floods in other areas that affect smaller portions. But all of the procedures are the same. We're attempting to contact people about their April 1 residency status. That's what we're about in those kinds of areas.

**STEPHEN BUCKNER:** Okay, thank you very much for joining today's operational press briefing. We will probably have one in about a month or so as we near the completion of the non-response follow-up phase of the census. If you have any additional questions about ongoing operations or anything that was covered in today's operational press briefing by Dr. Groves or by our regional director out of Philadelphia, Fernando Armstrong, please contact us at the Public Information Office at 301-763-3691. Thank you very much for joining us, have a good day.

END OF PRESS BRIEFING